

DEPARTMENT of the INTERIOR

FISH AND WILDLIFE SERVICE

news release

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NEW WILDLIFE REFUGE SET ON CALIFORNIA COAST

The largest undisturbed shoreline salt marsh between San Francisco and Mexico has now been guaranteed protection to preserve its wildlife values. President Nixon signed a bill August 29, 1972, authorizing establishment of the Seal Beach National Wildlife Refuge at Seal Beach, California. The action prevents a threatened highway project which would have seriously disrupted the ecology of the area.

Situated within the U.S. Naval Weapons Station at Seal Beach, the 700 acres set aside for refuge use will be turned over to administration by the Interior Department when the Defense Department has determined it is excess to military needs.

The refuge, which is expected to attract about 100,000 visitors a year, will be managed consistent with the Navy's management of the Weapons Station.

The marsh is of major ecological importance to the welfare of migratory birds and waterfowl in the Pacific Flyway. More than 100 species of migratory water, shore and marsh birds rest or feed on the area, including two endangered species, the California least tern and the light-footed clapper rail. Other threatened species, such as the brown pelican, also frequent the area.

This unique marsh just south of Los Angeles is accessible to more than 9 million people. The diversity of migratory birds and other forms of wildlife offer an excellent opportunity for nature study, environmental education and public fishing.

The U.S. Fish and Wildlife Service, the agency that operates national wildlife refuges, plans an elevated wildlife trail, an information and interpretation center, parking lots and access roads, according to Secretary of the Interior Rogers C. B. Morton.

The refuge boundaries shall be determined by the Secretary of the Interior with the advice and consent of the Secretary of the Navy.

"The establishment of Seal Beach National Wildlife Refuge authorizes the preservation and management of one of the last of California's disappearing estuaries and affords the residents of a densely populated metropolitan area the chance to see and learn from invaluable lands," said Secretary Morton.

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